

Loose Talk Creates a Tight Spot

When it was disclosed that the CIA's man in Costa Rica was being accused of complicity in a plot to overthrow the government of that country, most of us figured the man was the victim of a frameup.

After all, Costa Rica is one of the Western Hemisphere's most democratic countries. Its president, Jose Figueres, a long-time friend of the United States, is so anti-Communist that his foreign minister called last June for collective action "to promote an internal uprising" in Cuba.

Incredibly, though, it seems that Earl (Ted) Williamson—an American embassy official reputed to be the CIA chief in Costa Rica—left himself and the United States open to the accusation.

As Times correspondent Francis B. Kent reported in a weekend dispatch, Williamson had been critical of Costa Rica's decision to establish diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union. Just before Christmas,

he was heard predicting that the Figueres government would not last another two weeks.

When rumors of a plot to overthrow Figueres thereupon grew, the Costa Rican government remembered the diplomat's prediction—and, understandably, was not amused.

Only after repeated requests, however, did Washington finally get around to ordering Williamson out of Costa Rica a few days ago.

We do not believe for a minute that the United States (or Williamson, for that matter) was actually engaged in a plot to overthrow Figueres.

It is astounding, however, that a U.S. representative abroad—whether wearing his diplomatic or CIA hat—would indulge in loose talk imperiling relations with a friendly government. It is even more astounding that, once the flap arose, Washington was so lackadaisical about setting things right.

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